

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SAA-01 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 MCE-00 ACDA-12 /093 W
-----086651 190703Z /16

R 181350Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8770
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4049

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY, PEPR
SUBJ: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

1. SUMMARY. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. REACTION TO PRESIDENT SARKIS' 15 JULY SPEECH HAS BEEN MIXED AT BEST, AND THERE WAS GENERAL DISAPPOINTMENT THAT HE HAD NOT PROPOSED MORE FORCEFUL MEASURES. THE INDEPENDENT DAILY AN NAHR NOTED THAT REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS LUKEWARM. SARKIS WAS WIDELY CRITICIZED BY BOTH LEBANESE MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS, AS WELL AS BY SYRIAN AND THE PLO. CHRISTIAN CRITICISM CENTERED ON SARKIS' STATEMENTS CALLING THE SYRIAN DOMINATED ADF THE "LEGITIMATE FORCES" OF THE LEBANESE STATE, WHILE MUSLIM CRITICISM CENTERED ON SARKIS' STATEMENTS RULING OUT THE DISARMING OF THE LEBANESE MILITIAS. COMMENT: THESE REACTIONS INDICATE SARKIS' SPEECH HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY FOSTERED NATIONAL CONSENSUS AND THAT SARKIS WILL NOT NOW BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS FACING LEBANON ANY MORE EASILY THAN HE WAS ABLE
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TO BEFORE HE THREATENED TO RESIGN. END SUMMARY. END CONFIDENTIAL.

2. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SOME COMMENTS BY VARIOUS LEBANESE POLITICIANS AND PARTIES, AS REPORTED IN THE LEBANESE PRESS, WERE:

A. CHRISTIAN REACTION:

--NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN ON 16 JULY CHALLENGED THE PRESIDENT'S DECLARATION THAT SYRIAN TROOPS IN LEBANON REPRESENTED THE LEGITIMATE ARMED FORCES IN LEBANON. HE STATED, "WHEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AFFIRMS THAT THE SYRIANS ARE PART OF THE LEGAL FORCES OF THE COUNTRY, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK HIM TO SPECIFY UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES THEY ACTED LEGALLY OR RESPECTED THE FORMS OF LEGALITY."

--ON 17 JULY DORY CHAMOUN, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NLP, ASKED HOW THE LEBANESE COULD BE EXPECTED TO REGARD "THE PEOPLE WHO BOMBARDED US" AS THEIR LEGITIMATE ARMY, ACCORDING TO THE BEIRUT DAILY IKA.

--IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE BEIRUT WEEKLY MONDAY MORNING OF 17 JULY, BACHIR GEMAYEL STATED THAT "NOTHING HAS CHANGED" (AS A RESULT OF SARKIS' SPEECH), AND CALLED THE LEBANESE REGIME "OUTDATED" AND IN NEED OF CHANGE. (SEE BEIRUT 3997.) GEMAYEL ALSO RENEWED HIS CALL FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN FORCES FROM LEBANON.

--PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL ON 16 JULY SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO GIVE SARKIS THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT HIS PLANS AND TO CONSOLIDATE THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE.

--MARONITE PATRIARCH ANTONIOS KHORAICHE, A MODERATE, COMMENTED ON 16 JULY THAT THERE WERE FOUR CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS:

(1) REBUILDING THE STATE AND THE ARMY
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- (2) AN END TO REGIONAL QUARRELS IN LEBANON
- (3) IMPLEMENTATION OF ARAB FOREIGN PROMISES.
- (4) NATIONAL ENTENTE.

B. MUSLIM REACTION.

--FORMER PRIME MINISTER RASHID KARAMI ON 15 JULY SAID, "WE HOPE THIS TIME THAT WORDS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY CONCRETE ACTS." HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF REORGANIZING THE ARMY ON A BALANCED BASIS. THE LEFTIST DAILY AS-SAFIR QUOTED KARAMI AS SAYING THAT USING PALESTINIAN ARMAMENT AS AN EXCUSE FOR AVOIDING THE DISARMING OF THE LEBANESE MILITIAS WAS "NOT SATISFACTORY."

--HOUSE SPEAKER KAMAL ASAD CRITICIZED SARKIS FOR RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF DISARMING THE LEBANESE MILITIAS,

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ACCORDING TO IKE. HE WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF SARKIS' CONNECTING THE DISARMING OF THE MILITIAS TO THE DISARMING OF THE PALESTINAINS. ASAD COMMENTED THAT HE HOPED "THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THIS MATTER IS NOT OPEN TO DISCUSSION NOW, OR THAT THE GATHERING OF ARMS WILL NOT BE ATTEMPTED TODAY . . ." THE SPEAKER ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH SYRIAN PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASAD, WHO WAS READY TO IMPLEMENT THE RESOLUTION OF LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES CALLING FOR "THE GATHERING OF ARMS FROM ALL PARTIES." ASAD STATED THAT "WE BELIEVE THAT IT (DISARMAMENT) IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH SECURITY AND STABILITY CAN BE BUILT. IT WOULD ELIMINATE THE VARIOUS ARMED MINI-STATES WHOSE EXISTENCE IS BLOCKING THE RISE OF A TRUE LEGITIMATE STATE."

--THE CONSERVATIVE (SUNNITE) ISLAMIC COUNCIL ECHOED ASAD'S COMMENTS. THE COUNCIL ACCUSED THE PRESIDENT OF NOT BEING FRANK IN HIS MESSAGE AND EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER SARKIS' DECLARED INTENTION TO POSTPONE THE GATHERING OF ARMS FROM THE MILTIAS. THE COUNCIL, WHILE NOTING THAT IT HAD CONSIDERED
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TENTLY SUPPORTED THE PRESIDENT, STATED THAT, "ITS SUPPORT HAS REACHED ITS MAXIMUM LIMIT." THE COUNCIL CALLED UPON SARKIS TO, "TAKE ACTION, AND DO NOT LET THE NATION DETERIORATE FURTHER . . ."

--THE (SUNNITE) ISLAMIC GROUPING, WHICH IS CLOSELY ALLIED WITH THE ISALMIC COUNCIL, REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE SPEECH. FORMER PRIME MINISTER SA'AB SALAM TOLD REPORTERS,

"I HAVE NO COMMENT ON IT AT THIS TIME," ACCORDING TO IKE. ANOTHER MEMBER, FORMER PRIME MINISTER TAQI-AL-DIN AL SOLH, SAID THAT "THE IMPORTANT THING NOW IS THE PRESIDENT HAS WITHDRAWN HIS RESIGNATION."

--THE LEFTIST PSP, HOWEVER, ALSO ECHOED ASAD'S CRITICISMS, AND ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ON 17 JULY WHICH DECLARED SARKIS HAD:

(1) MADE THE DISARMAMENT OF THE PHALANGE AND NLP MILITIAS CONDITIONAL ON THE DISARMAMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS. THE PSP COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT, "IT IS UNACCEPTABLE TO DRAW A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE ARMS CARRIED BY THE PHALANGIST AND CHAMOUNIST GANGS . . . AND THE ARMS CARRIED BY THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGREEMENTS SIGNED BETWEEN THE LEBANESE STATE AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION . . ."

(2) ANNOUNCED THAT STATE'S INTENTION TO COMPLETE THE REBUILDING OF THE ARMY AND SEND IT TO THE SOUTH. THE PSP COMMUNIQUE ASKED "HOW CAN THE ARMY IN ITS PRESENT STRUCTURE PLAY ANY NATIONAL ROLE, BEING, AS IT IS, AN EXTENSION OF THE ISOLATIONIST MILITIAS AND ZIONIST INFLUENCE IN LEBANON?"

(3) CALLED FOR NATIONAL ACCORD. THE COMMUNIQUE REPLIED THAT, "THE PSP . . . REFUSES TO ENTER INTO DIALOGUE WITH THE PHALANGIST AND CHAMOUNIST GANGS WHICH ARE ALLIED WITH THE ZIONIST ENEMY."

(4) FAILED TO MENTION THE RELATIONS BETWEEN "SOME POLITICAL LEADERS AND ISRAEL, ALTHOUGH THOSE LEADERS PUBLICLY REVEALED THOSE LINKS AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE."
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--PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS, ON A SLIGHTLY MORE UPBEAT NOTE, SAID ON 16 JULY, "WE HAVE GREAT HOPES THAT THE DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC TO WITHDRAW THE IDEA OF RESIGNING WILL BE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW PHASE WHICH WILL BE MARKED BY DETERMINATION TO BUILD A STRONG AND JUST STATE." HE ADDED THAT UNTIL THE LEBANESE ARMY IS REBUILT, ASSISTANCE MUST BE DRAWN FROM THE ADF.

C. SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN REACTION.

--ACCORDING TO IKE ON 17 JULY, SYRIAN COMMENTS IN REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ALSO STRESSED THAT UNLESS THE MILITIAS WERE DISBANDED THE LEBANESE STATE WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO HOLD SWAY IN LEBANON.

--THE PLO'S OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FALASTIME AL THAWRA ON 16 JULY EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT IN SARKIS' SPEECH, SAYING IT WAS A "SHOCK TO THOSE WHO HAD EXPECTED THE REGIME TO BE MORE CANDID REGARDING THE ISSUES NOW BEING CONSIDERED IN THE LEBANESE ARENA." END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: THESE REACTIONS INDICATE THAT:

A. SARKIS' SPEECH HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY FOSTERED NATIONAL

CONSENSUS;

B. SARKIS WILL NOT NOW BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS
FACING LEBANON ANY MORE EASILY THAN HE WAS BEFORE HE THREA-
TENED TO RESIGN. END COMMENT. END CONFIDENTIAL. PARKER

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